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Marching with Dr. King: Ralph Helstein and the United Packinghouse Workers of America

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governments. At the present time conflicted South Dakota Republicans have learned to live with massive contradictions and continue to take pride as “values” voters in the state. The future of the Republican Party in South Dakota remains to be seen.

This book deserves attention by interested scholars in agrarian states. It is timely and answers many questions about the Great Plains tradition.

Marching with Dr. King: Ralph Helstein and the United Packinghouse Workers of America, by Cyril Robinson. Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2011. xii, 256 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$44.95 cloth.

Reviewer Bruce Fehn is associate professor of social studies education at the University of Iowa. He is the author of several articles in the *Annals of Iowa* and elsewhere about the United Packinghouse Workers of America.

In *Marching with Dr. King*, Cyril Robinson, a labor lawyer and emeritus professor of criminal justice, focuses on Ralph Helstein’s leadership of the United Packinghouse Workers of America (UPWA). The book traces Helstein’s entire life (1908–1985) from his boyhood in Minneapolis to his death in Chicago at age 76. Robinson devotes most of the book to Helstein’s leadership, first, as the union’s general counsel and then as UPWA president from 1948 to 1968. Robinson is particularly concerned to link Helstein’s Judaism to his commitment to democratic unionism and civil rights. As have other historians, particularly Rick Halpern and Roger Horowitz, Robinson describes how, under Helstein’s leadership, the UPWA forged exemplary programs to break down segregation and discrimination in the union, meatpacking plants, and communities in which workers lived.

In separate chapters on African Americans and women, Robinson discusses Helstein’s and the union’s efforts to enforce antidiscrimination clauses in union contracts with Armour, Swift, Wilson, and other packinghouses. He argues that Helstein built upon local, shop-floor anti-discrimination labor actions to establish effective antidiscrimination programs in the wake of a defeat in the nationwide packing strike of 1948. With the union reeling from raids from competing unions and companies’ wholesale dismissal of strike leaders, Helstein created an Anti-Discrimination Department led by African American and Iowan Russell Lasley, who had been a leader in Waterloo’s UPWA Local 46. The UPWA also required every union local to have an antidiscrimination department, and the national union headquarters made certain that the local departments had antidiscrimination programs in the meatpacking plants and communities.

Helstein and other UPWA leaders, together with rank-and-file members, cultivated antidiscrimination initiatives and programs during the Second Red Scare, a time when the government weakened unions by insisting that they purge themselves of communists. Robinson describes how Helstein marshaled his talents as a union leader and lawyer to maintain freedom of speech inside the UPWA and enabled members' diverse ideological and political perspectives to strengthen the union. Indeed, several prominent UPWA leaders, including Herbert March, Jesse Prosten, and Leslie Orear, were communists. In long passages from March's and Orear's oral history testimonies, Robinson allows these highly articulate leaders to explain in their own words Helstein's devotion to rank-and-file workers' lives and the importance of democratic and interracial unionism.

Indeed, the book's long oral history excerpts make the case that Helstein was a gifted union leader who earned deep respect for his negotiating talents and openness to rank-and-file workers' concerns. Herbert March, a remarkable UPWA and Communist Party leader, had this to say about Helstein's capacity to maintain worker unity: "Helstein made a big contribution to our union. He played a role of being a unifying force that enabled the unity of a broad membership . . . left to right. And he also helped to establish and helped develop a real democratic, honest organization. He pursued an excellent course, developing a relationship of the union to the community, and the struggle against discrimination in all forms—A progressive unionist in every sense of the word" (70).

Although *Marching with Dr. King* contains important information about Helstein's life and union leadership, the publisher did the author a disservice by publishing the book in what appears to be draft form. The book contains many grammatical errors and suffers from confusing citations. That is a shame because Robinson conducted considerable research, including especially his interviews with union leaders and individuals close to Helstein. One only hopes that the author's interview tapes and transcripts find a repository where other scholars of industrial and meatpacking unionism can one day consult them.

In spite of its deficiencies, this book is valuable for those interested in progressive union leadership and the life of a brilliant union leader, one who worked tirelessly to obtain wage hikes, pensions, improved working conditions, and health and vacation benefits for workers. Although Helstein never literally marched with Dr. King, as the book's title might suggest, he was King's confidant and friend, and the union contributed financially to the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. Even more important, Helstein worked with other UPWA

leaders, as well as rank-and-file members, to propel forward the civil rights movement in packinghouses and communities in Iowa, the Midwest, and throughout the nation.

Remembering Roadside America: Preserving the Recent Past as Landscape and Place, by John A. Jakle and Keith A. Sculle. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2011. xxiii, 284 pp. Illustrations, notes, index. \$29.95 paper.

Reviewer Mary Anne Beecher is an associate professor of interior design at the University of Manitoba. She has a Ph.D. in American Studies from the University of Iowa. Vernacular and roadside architecture are among her wide-ranging research interests.

Remembering Roadside America is the seventh book by two of the most prolific researchers on the history of twentieth-century American roadside architecture. Most of their collaborative publications have been evolutionary histories that focus on particular types of buildings: gas stations, motels, and the like. This book, however, is a rich examination of a range of historic preservation issues. It contributes to our understanding of the significance of the modern American roadside and its ability to capture and express the cultural values and beliefs of twentieth-century Americans.

Since the advent of the automobile transformed the nature of travel and transportation throughout the United States, most Americans have struggled with how to understand and value the roadside environment that resulted from its popularity. Buildings dedicated to the support of the car's maintenance and operation and to drivers' and passengers' need for food, drink, and lodging began to sprout along roads' edges as soon as automobile ownership became commonplace. Such commercial endeavors became thriving contributors to the architectural history of small towns and large cities alike, although the buildings that usually housed these businesses were often small and somewhat temporary in nature. Likewise, roadside signage and billboards that advertised the presence of such businesses were often extreme in their eye-catching quality but also quick to change and only marginally controlled or regulated.

With the passage of time, the American roadside began to evolve into more of a collage than a palimpsest as larger, newer, and often more homogenous franchised businesses were inserted into the mix. The shift from small highways to bypassing interstates left some roadside relics from earlier times to linger—a point made poignantly in Pixar's animated movie *Cars* (2006). How to merge the obscurity and